

ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR ADULT
AND CONTINUING
EDUCATION

REPORT

PROTECTING THE
FUTURE FOR
ADULT EDUCATION

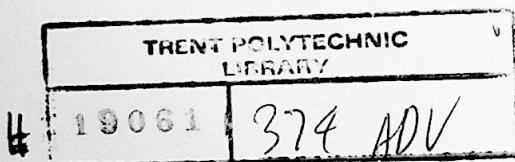
The Advisory Council was established by the Secretary of State for Education and Science in October 1977 with the following remit:

To advise generally on matters relevant to the provision of education for adults in England and Wales, and in particular:

(a) to promote co-operation between the various bodies in adult education and review current practice, organisation and priorities, with a view to the most effective deployment of available resources; and

(b) to promote the development of future policies and priorities, with full regard to the concept of education as a process continuing throughout life.

This report, issued at the end of the Advisory Council's first three year term, is concerned specifically with part (a) of the remit. In April 1980 the Council published a discussion paper, *Present Imperfect*, which sought responses to its description of the issues currently affecting the provision of adult general education; the responses received by the Advisory Council have been taken into account in formulating this report.



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PROTECTING THE FUTURE FOR ADULT EDUCATION

**A report on the issues
affecting the present provision of
Adult General Education**



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... the necessary conclusion is that adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there, nor as a thing which concerns only a short span of early manhood, but that adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong.

Final Report of the Ministry of Reconstruction's Adult Education Committee (1919)

The immediate task of the authorities in regard to further education is indeed a challenging one. It is to assume leadership in the co-operative enterprise of community education. A service which will touch so wide a range of human interest and inspiration must remain flexible and adaptable; but at the same time very great importance attaches to the breadth and boldness of our plans and the vigour with which we put them into practice as opportunity allows. . . The Education Act of 1944 allows great freedom for initiative and experiment, and it is the Minister's hope that this freedom will be used fully in any direction that offers promise.

Ministry of Education Pamphlet No 8 *Further Education* (1947)

There is, perhaps no branch of our vast educational system which should more attract within its particular sphere the aid and encouragement of the State than adult education. . . I have no doubt myself that a man or woman earnestly seeking in grown-up life to be guided to wide and suggestive knowledge in its largest and most uplifted sphere will make the best of all the pupils in this age of clatter and buzz, of gape and gloat. The appetite of adults to be shown the foundations and processes of thought will never be denied by a British Administration cherishing the continuity of our Island life.

Sir Winston Churchill (1953)

... we are not seeking to exalt one sector of education over any other. Our emphasis is upon the partnership between all the sectors of education that can produce an integrated, comprehensive service of education for all our people at all stages of their lives: this is what the Education Act 1944 set forth as its aim. The foundations of this partnership are there in the developing schools and colleges; but the top storey is still to be added. It is not necessary for us to propose a great new system with vast outlay of public money: we have sought to show the remarkable potentialities of an intelligent employment of resources already in being. But to achieve the objectives of the Act there must now be accorded a priority by central and local government, and be undertaken with an attack, that would be the logical sequel to the breakthrough in vocational education in the 1950s.

Adult Education: A Plan for Development (The Russell Report) (1973)

Education is not simply a provision that is available between the age of 5 and 18 or 21. It must be a continuous process. It must be like a 13 amp plug which can be connected to a ring circuit from time to time to make the lights go on again.

Dr Rhodes Boyson (1980)

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CHAIRMAN'S PREFACE

At the beginning of this month, in addressing the North of England Education Conference, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mr Mark Carlisle, said

"Education is vital to this country. Now is the time for the education service to proclaim this truth and to explain the reasons which make it true, not in arcane and jargon-ridden internal discussions but in clear and simple language directed at its clients. Unless education makes its own case, and makes it well, it runs the risk that it will not receive its proper share of whatever resources continue to be available."

That is what the Advisory Council has sought to do in this report. But it is significant that in making the case for the continuance – and I might even say survival – of the public adult education service, we have found it necessary to direct much of our thinking and our conclusions to the politicians and administrators in the education world, and not to the millions of 'clients' of adult education.

Those millions know from personal experience the value to be gained from adult education. We are now regrettably in the position of having to defend those opportunities for adult learning from the accumulating adverse effects of static or declining public finance. To do that we have still to justify the value of adult education to those who are responsible for deciding what public funds it should receive.

I am personally sad that after almost a century in Britain of publicly provided adult education, which has benefited so many people in so many ways and which has set the lead for many other countries to follow, it apparently remains necessary to argue the case for the continued commitment of a reasonable proportion of public funds. That proportion now seems to have fallen to below a half of one per cent of the national education budget. This is not reasonable. Of course I acknowledge that central and local government are extraordinarily hard pressed to maintain their public services and that consequently harsh financial decisions have to be made, often after long and anxious deliberation. The point I, and my Council colleagues, would stress is that, as a public service, adult education has always been slenderly financed and even small cuts must have disproportionately large effects on it.

Adult education may always have been financed at the margins of the education budget, but as this report shows it is in no way marginal to the educational well-being of the people of this country. There it is, and must remain, central.

Nevertheless the Council is not pleading for unduly favoured treatment for adult education. There is much that the public adult education service can do to sustain and improve the scope and standards of its own provision, and this report seeks to make it clear. In that sense a good deal of the report is addressed primarily to adult educators. But they cannot be expected to respond effectively without the confidence, understanding and support of their local employing authorities and the national Education Departments.

The Advisory Council is deeply indebted to the committee, convened by Jeanne Bisgood, which was given the task of preparing this report. It has not been easy to keep abreast of all the policy and budgetary changes which have been occurring with increasing rapidity over the past year across the adult education sector in 104 local education authorities, and we are therefore most particularly grateful to Leslie Burrows, the former Deputy Director of Education for Nottinghamshire, for forsaking retirement to help Miss Bisgood's committee in collecting information and drafting papers. We also sincerely thank the many people and organisations who responded to the Council's preliminary discussion paper *Present Imperfect*: the help they gave is much appreciated. The names of the members of the committee and of the respondents are given on pages 61 to 64.

RICHARD HOGGART
Chairman of Council

January 1981

I INTRODUCTION

This report is primarily about adult general education, rather than provision specifically for job, career, or manpower requirements. It concentrates on the provision made by the adult education services of the local education authorities and their partners in the local centres, because that is the area which presently seems to be most seriously at risk. This does not mean that the Advisory Council is less concerned about the other major contributors, notably the universities' adult education departments, the Workers' Educational Association and other voluntary bodies in the adult education field, but they are considered here principally in the light of their relationship to the local education authorities. These authorities provide through a wide variety of centres and types of institution, but for simplicity the report uses the word 'centre' to comprise all types of adult education units.

- 1 For the last five years successive governments have sought to reduce expenditure on the public services. The present world-wide recession and Britain's own counter-inflation measures have intensified the effects of this policy, with unavoidable implications for the whole education service. Yet the need, whether latent or expressed, for adult education increases in times of economic difficulty, just when the resources allocated to it are disproportionately curtailed – in the 1980/81 Rate Support Grant the amount for adult general education was reduced by *one third*.⁽¹⁾
- 2 The financial problems confronting local education authorities are enormous. Nevertheless, some authorities, understanding the growing importance of adult education to modern society, have realised the danger expressed in January 1980 in the House of Commons by Dr Rhodes Boyson, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Education and Science, "*of cutting so near the bone that we cannot get the situation going again when we put more flesh on*". Other authorities, which have withdrawn nearly all financial support, appear not to appreciate the real nature and needs of the service.
- 3 The adult education service has faced difficult times before, but its essential fabric is now being seriously threatened in many places. Significant increases in funding are needed, and would naturally be welcomed by the Council, but there is little realistic hope of the service receiving substantial additional resources from public funds until general economic conditions improve (and that may not happen for quite some time) and until there

(1) See pages 57 to 60 for notes and references

is a more positive political commitment to it both nationally and locally.

- 4 This report, which argues for the maintenance of at least a minimum base on which future development policies can be built complements the more comprehensive document dealing with the longer term development of continuing education which the Council, in line with part (b) of its remit, will shortly be publishing. The implementation of these longer term strategies for continuing education must depend on the maintenance now of the basic structure of the adult education service.
- 5 The professional staff in adult education have accepted the challenge of maintaining and wherever possible strengthening the basic features of the service within their reduced budgets. Knowledge of good practice and recognition of essential priorities are now especially important in order to get the best value from whatever resources are available. Much of this report deals with the main resource elements and their most effective use, which the Council hopes will be helpful to local education authorities and other providers. Some of the report's contents bearing on the range and quality of provision are relevant whatever the financial climate.



II THE NATURE AND THE NEED

6 In 1947 the Ministry of Education issued *Pamphlet No. 8* as an extended commentary on the 1944 Education Act and said with reference to Section 41(b) of the Act:

"If a great expansion of technical education is essential to the well-being of our economic life, so equally is a wide development of general adult education necessary if we are – as individuals or as a nation – to deal competently and democratically with the complex political questions of our time, or to develop those interests and activities which go to the making of a full and satisfying life".(2)

7 Time is essential for effective education; with every year that passes more time is available to more adults, to the employed as well as the involuntary unemployed. The balance between work and non-work continues to change. The interludes between periods of employment, the incidence of shorter working weeks and working shifts, 'flexitime' working, and earlier retirement are all going to increase. This creates both the opportunity and the necessity for education to become as much related to 'living' as to 'working'. In the words of *Pamphlet No. 8*:

"Leisure is not so many non-working hours to be got through as best may be but a possession used in the development of resources within oneself and to be shared with other people",(3)

or as Dr Boyson said recently in Parliament that after meeting technological and remedial needs "*there is a third need that has to be met by adult education and that is self-fulfilment*".

8 Not only work patterns are changing. It scarcely needs repeating that the nature of our society and the environment in which we live is undergoing constant and accelerating change. Technology changes the physical environment, the levels of noise, traffic and pollution, the nature and variety of food, clothing and housing, and indirectly it changes the roles of the individual and the state, of employer and employee, of teacher and student, of man and woman, of parent and child, as well as the significance of family life and the inter-dependence of people. Change calls for adaptation, adaptation requires understanding, and understanding depends on education. The provision of education must keep pace with the implications of change so as to help all of us to cope as effectively as possible with the decisions which as adults we are continually having to make, and so as to contribute to the knowledge and the mental and physical health essential for full and active lives. Both the

time available and the need for adult education are growing: the need can be seen as made up of personal, social and political elements.

9 The *personal* element lies in the raising of the level of general education, so as, in Katherine Mansfield's words, "*to help me become all that I am capable of becoming*". The four broad areas of provision for personal development are:

- *Arts and humanities*, including literature and language, history, philosophy and comparative religion, music, and the visual arts. Many people find that the development of cultural interests, the search for meaning and purpose in human affairs, and indeed the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, enriches their lives.
- *Sciences and technology*. No adult can claim to be educated who does not have some knowledge of the sciences and technology as they increasingly affect all our lives.
- *Practical crafts and creative outlets*. The wide range of domestic, artistic and constructive crafts help to develop confidence, skill and judgement, to sharpen appreciation of quality, style and form in materials, and to improve domestic competence and economy. The mastering of a craft or the acquisition of a new skill can be as important to many as is the gaining of more academic knowledge to others.
- *Physical education* and the maintenance of physical fitness. For most of us work and domestic life now require relatively little physical effort, but physical exercise is important for maintaining health. Whilst the time and resources devoted to physical education in the schools have rightly been increasing, the need is perhaps even greater in the middle and later years of adult life.

10 The quality of our *public and civic life* is no less important than the quality of personal life. There are signs that an increasing number of people, particularly women, would welcome more extended opportunities for education in general political and community affairs. A democracy should encourage its citizens to be politically literate; voters should be able to understand the main political, economic and environmental issues of the day so that informed and reasoned choices can be made. Universal suffrage without education is too fair a field for the political demagogue. The Hansard Society's researches have shown the extent of ignorance in this country about basic political facts and arguments. Adult education can contribute to industrial and economic understanding and to social and political tolerance. The roles of the police, magistrates, local

councillors, and shop stewards need to be better understood, and increasingly adults need education for the responsibilities now being undertaken more widely in social life such as, for example, school governors, local councillors, and officers in voluntary societies and clubs. There is plenty of scope for wider public *participation* in community affairs, and there needs to be more effort to find out how adult education can best help in this process.⁽⁴⁾

- 11 The personal and the social elements of the need for adult education come together in *parental and family education*. In recent years there has been much more appreciation of the value of teaching parents about child development and encouraging them to take an active interest in contributing to the education of their children. But in Britain we are still not sufficiently aware that the educational attainments and confidence of adults are reflected in the educational goals and attainment of their children. To concentrate educational provision on the young to the exclusion of their parents is to ignore a fundamental influence on children's ability and willingness to learn. This sets parental and family education within the broad context of much adult education provision, where it can be seen most specifically in courses dealing with 'the first years of life', 'the pre-school child', 'keep your family fit' and similar topics. Courses about marriage and marriage problems, and about family planning and family relationships similarly contribute to family well-being.
- 12 The current *demographic* changes are adding to the demands on the adult education service at the same time as they are reducing the demands on our schools. The 'bulge' presently passing out of the school system will shortly add to the demands on adult education. At the other end of the age scale, 20 per cent of our population is over sixty and the number of retired people is increasing by 1,500 a day. As the Health Education Council has stressed, educational and creative outlets are important for physical and mental health throughout the years of this 'third age', particularly as so many retired people have not enjoyed much formal education during their lives. Pre-retirement courses contain much valuable advice about maintaining physical and mental health in retirement, about diet, finance, housing, leisure interests, and voluntary work. Only a very small minority of those about to retire are able to benefit from the current limited provision, which needs to be extended whenever and wherever possible.
- 13 For some years now the incidence of unemployment has been increasing. Since the number of employable adults is esti-

mated to rise by more than two million during the 1980s, the problems stemming from unemployment are unlikely to lessen quickly. Adult education can provide opportunities for satisfying and purposeful activities, and so help to maintain personal self-esteem and morale.

- 14 In the past little account has been taken of the educational needs of women. The recent growth of day-time courses, especially timetabled to meet the needs of people with domestic commitments, has shown that many women are seeking suitably arranged educational opportunities. Apart from the 'New Opportunities for Women' courses, and courses on such topics as 'women and health', 'women and money', 'women and the law', there is scope for more educational work with mothers of young and school-aged children.
- 15 There is a continuing need for compensatory and remedial education for economically and socially disadvantaged groups; for members of ethnic minorities with language or social difficulties; for those lacking literacy and basic skills; for the mentally ill and the handicapped; and for those in hospitals, prisons and borstals: in short, for programmes directed, as the Russell report recommended, towards helping adults, whatever their circumstances, develop their own personal abilities and interests to the benefit of themselves and society.
- 16 Public money is rightly spent on libraries, museums, art galleries and concert halls, and adult education courses have encouraged many people to make more and better informed use of these. Social and political education may also help to reduce the potential for social and racial misunderstanding, and adult education's contribution to physical and mental health can help to reduce calls on the medical and other social services. Whilst we all learn from our own direct experience at home and at work, from talking, reading, listening and looking, and in many other different ways, the process of learning is complemented by engaging in specially organised educational activities.
- 17 Sceptics may ask whether all this adult education would really be necessary if the school system was fully effective. This is to mistake the part of schooling for the whole of education. Too much is expected of our schools. It in no way belittles their achievement to note the recent growing concern about the curriculum in the secondary schools. The Council has already commented formally on the over-loading of the school curriculum.⁽⁵⁾ Much that is currently attempted in the schools could be more effectively learned in adulthood. In many spheres –

politics, psychology, economics, literature, music – most pupils have neither the experience nor the maturity for full understanding and appreciation. For these and other perhaps even more decisive social reasons many pupils find their school experience less than satisfactory: they leave school at the earliest opportunity and have little subsequent concern for self-improvement or creative or cultural interests. Young people cannot be prepared by initial schooling alone to cope with fifty or more years of adult life in a world that is changing and developing as rapidly as ours now is; nor is it appropriate or possible for the schools to attempt this. School is primarily the place to forge the basic tools for learning, which may then be used keenly and confidently in education throughout life.



III DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 1945

18 The 1944 Education Act organised education into three stages: primary, secondary, and further or post-school education. Vast school building programmes in the 1950s and 1960s enabled the school leaving age to be raised from 14 to 16 and made a reality of secondary education for all. Section 41 of the Act requires every local education authority to secure the provision, subject to the proviso about being "*in accordance with schemes of further education*", of adequate facilities for:

- (a) *"full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age; and*
- (b) *leisure time occupation in such organised cultural, training and recreational activities as are suited to their requirements, for any persons over compulsory school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose."*

19 From the outset explanatory notes and commentaries on the Act took the general view that the full-time and part-time education referred to in (a) above meant especially vocational and 'county college' type courses for young people in their immediate post-school years. Demand for these courses exploded, stimulated by the government's White Papers on *Technical Education* (1956) and *Better Opportunities in Further Education* (1961). Within twenty years virtually every industrial town had a completely new or greatly extended 'College of Further Education'. The 'night schools' of pre-war years underwent a sea change as the teenagers and their vocational courses moved into the colleges.

20 Accordingly the country's main educational concerns became more and more related to school and employment. General education for adults became confined to the context of section 41(b), and local education authority provision was mainly channelled through school-based evening centres (the former 'night school' buildings) with a clear identification as a 'leisure time' or a 'recreative' activity. Whilst any education which takes place after leaving school and outside the sphere of work must by definition be "a leisure-time occupation", the label has led many people, including national politicians and local councillors to regard adult education as less important than work-related or 'real' further education and therefore marginal to the main concerns of the educational system.

21 Nevertheless, increasing local authority support for adult education enabled the service to grow and to improve its standards. Its growth was most rapid in the decade preceding the publication in 1973 of the Russell report,⁽⁶⁾ by which time

the service was catering for nearly 2 million students and employing approximately 1,000 full-time and 100,000 part-time staff. The range of subjects and courses expanded, the most popular being domestic crafts, physical education and dance, fine art, music and drama, foreign languages and literature, history and the allied humanities – in that order.

22 The Russell report drew attention to the much wider educational needs of adults and of special groups within society. It called for significantly more social, political and community education of adults generally, and for more remedial and compensatory education for 'disadvantaged' groups and for other categories with special needs. Adult literacy work has perhaps been the best publicised of subsequent developments, but work with the handicapped, the unemployed, the elderly, prisoners, young mothers, and ethnic minority groups has all expanded, often with financial and other help from departments and agencies other than education departments. In the past five years local literacy schemes have helped more than 200,000 students. But, as the Advisory Council has already demonstrated, this is still only a small fraction of the estimated total of adults with very limited literacy skills, and very much more needs to be done in the wider field of adult basic education.⁽⁷⁾

23 Since the time of the Russell report there has been some increase in day-time provision catering especially for mature women: many more adults are enrolling for GCE 'O' and 'A' level general courses: the Open University has grown enormously both in first degree and non-degree work: the amount of educational broadcasting and other distance learning has increased: the contribution made by the further education colleges to adult general education has grown and, given the opportunity, would continue to do so. The 'open college' development in the North West has shown how universities, polytechnics and further education colleges could co-operate to develop new approaches and break down some of the 'barriers to access' to higher level courses.

24 A national survey of the adult population⁽⁸⁾ commissioned by the Advisory Council in 1980 showed the strength of the current demand for education amongst the adult population and indicated that many more adults would like to participate if only they were able to do so. The adult education service has demonstrated over the years that it is flexible and innovative and capable of identifying and responding to need and demand. Unfortunately its recent difficulties have become increasingly serious; they are now becoming acute.

IV THE LEANER YEARS

25 The experience shared by most people working in the adult education field is that the resources which were increasingly made available to them throughout the 1960s and into the early '70s began to diminish from the mid '70s onwards. This chronology reflects the general sense of concern about the national economy and the increasing insistence of recent years by central and local government on economies in public expenditure. Thus most adult educators have met more difficulties more frequently and more frustratingly in the past few years than ever before. Certainly the Advisory Council itself has been aware that this apparently inexorable trend has accelerated since it was established at the end of 1977 and it has responded accordingly. Indeed this report stems from the Council's growing concern about the state of the adult education services. It nevertheless remains as difficult to measure the changes which have occurred as it is to interpret the statistics which are available. The published national statistics of further education, assembled mainly by types of institutions and modes of attendance, are in some ways misleading indicators of participation in and expenditure on adult general education.

26 These difficulties of measurement and interpretation are fully examined in the Council's recently published occasional paper on the *Scope and Costs of the Education and Training of Adults in Britain*, where the author, Maureen Woodhall, concludes that in the *whole* field of the education and training of adults there has been little change overall between the early and the late 1970s either in the number of adult students and trainees or in real terms in the financial resources invested – losses in some sectors have been offset by gains in others.⁽⁹⁾ Within the global figures examined by Maureen Woodhall the specific figures for adult education enrolments, as collected by the Department of Education and Science, show a similar 'steady state' although with considerable fluctuations between years. Expenditure statistics appear to tell a similar story with net recurrent local authority expenditure on the adult education service running at almost £35 million in 1975/76 (0.66 per cent of their total educational expenditure) and £53 million in 1979/80 (0.61 per cent of the total). Allowing for inflation over these four years the real expenditure seems to have remained fairly constant, although in the absence of any generally applicable and clear definition of adult education the basis on which these figures have been collected remains open to question. The really drastic reductions in expenditure may be expected to show in 1980/81 (for which the figures are not yet

available) as a result of the very large cut of a third in the Rate Support Grant element for adult education from £45 million to £32 million. It remains less than clear how central government funding for local government spending will be affected by the change from the present system of Rate Support Grant to the proposed Block Grant arrangements. This takes place from April 1981 onwards and the present evidence is that the new basis of calculation may prove still more detrimental to the 'non-compulsory' sectors of education, such as adult education. It is clear that the effects on adult education allocations will need to be carefully monitored.(10)

27 Thus the official figures for local authorities' net expenditure on adult education show that the proportion of their total education budget spent on adult education reached the highest point of 0.66 per cent in 1975/76, and the subsequent decline in that proportion may have brought it down to as low as 0.4 per cent in 1980/81, with a corresponding reduction in real terms in the actual expenditure totals. It has been frequently noted that percentages as small as these are no more than the accepted 'margin of error' in drawing up total education budgets. The reduction between 1975 and 1980 is likely to be something over one-third in real terms, although as yet it is not possible to be precise because local authorities have discretion on how to apply the Rate Support Grant which they receive. During this same period the amounts and the proportioning of overheads (rates, loan charges on buildings and equipment, heating and lighting costs) charged to adult education have increased, so that within this reduced total the proportion of expenditure allocated directly to teaching costs must have diminished even further. Few other sectors of the public service can have experienced budget reductions on this scale, and the cumulative effects of these cuts must be disproportionately large because of the relatively small budgets on which they have been and are being imposed.

28 It is not surprising therefore that many adult educators believe that if this trend continues the service will be irreparably damaged. Already there has been a significant deterioration in the provision made by as many as half of the local education authorities: in a few places the entire service may be regarded as in serious danger of disappearance. Despite their very great difficulties, some local authorities have tried to safeguard their adult education provision wherever possible. Even more have given priority to sustaining provision for 'disadvantaged' groups – for illiterates, the unemployed, ethnic minorities and the handicapped – and the availability of funds for much of this

work from other government departments and agencies has helped considerably. It is nevertheless clear that budgets for this work will also soon be in danger of substantial reductions.

- 29 Reduced resources must have effects on the scale and scope of the service, and the composition of the student body. Because adult education is organised in a diversity of ways and through a variety of institutions, including adult centres, further education colleges, short and long-term residential colleges, community centres, and voluntary organisations, it is difficult to obtain accurate and reliable statistics covering the whole provision on a national basis. The Department of Education's statistics for enrolments in adult education and youth centres indicated a high point of just over 2 million students in November 1978 (when the method of computation had been changed), but on this new basis there was a significant decline in November 1979, which has almost certainly been repeated in 1980. Furthermore, the number and length of course meetings have generally been reduced, and courses are often unable to extend into the spring and summer terms. Perhaps even more important is the decline in total student hours, which may have been as large as 25 per cent between 1975 and 1980, even allowing for the increase in work with 'disadvantaged' categories.
- 30 To maintain course programmes at this lower level, and at the same time reduce *net* costs, authorities have been obliged to look for larger fee payments from students. Until the mid-1970s the fee paid by students was generally regarded as a registration charge, giving evidence of commitment to study, rather than a significant contribution to the educational costs: fees were of course adjusted from time to time in the light of general increases in costs, but they remained modest. More recently the position has changed to the point where many authorities require students to pay the greater part of the direct costs of the provision. This represents a radical change in policy: it will be an even more fundamental change if this new policy is carried still further to recover all the costs of provision.
- 31 Student fees have now risen to levels which have reduced demand for many courses, and in some places the service is being priced out of the market. This need to maximise income from student fees has upset the balance of some programmes by putting a premium on those popular courses and activities which can attract large numbers and become in effect self-financing. The balance has shifted even more where authori-

ties, determined to preserve provision for the 'disadvantaged', have virtually eliminated their subvention to other types of work.

32 There is some substance in the old contention that adult general education has generally benefited the more, rather than the less, educated. By definition it is the already well educated who have derived most from the statutory, free and career-related sectors of education, and it is hardly surprising that they take more advantage of the optional, fee-paying, and demand-related provision whose main attractions lie in self-development and the intrinsic interest of the subjects studied. Experience suggests that there is also some correlation between fee levels and the socio-economic composition of the student body. Until recently there were grounds for believing that, apart from the development of work specifically aimed at educationally and economically disadvantaged groups, participation by the lower socio-economic groups in adult general education was increasing at a proportionately faster rate.⁽¹¹⁾ This trend now appears to have been reversed. One university extra-mural department recently recorded that:

"The steeply rising fees in recent years have made it even more difficult than previously to extend our work to those sections of the community who, although in most need of the kind of education which we provide, are also most vulnerable to increasing costs",

and Edward Hutchinson's latest Leicestershire study confirms that:

"those who have been hardest hit by the enforced economies in provision and by increased class fees are the older, poorer and educationally less sophisticated women".

33 Notwithstanding the amount of expenditure on adult education assumed by central government in determining the Rate Support Grant, it is a matter for each local authority to determine individually how much it shall or shall not spend on the service. As Dr Boyson said recently in a House of Commons debate:

"Once money has been put into the Rate Support Grant one has to rely on the local authority and public opinion within that authority to ensure that the money provided for adult education is used in that way. This can only be done by creating the proper climate of opinion".

That climate of opinion now appears to differ so widely amongst local authorities that instead of a service with a semblance of nationally accepted standards, as elsewhere in

education and the other public services, access to adult general education now depends increasingly on where people live and on what they can afford and are willing to pay.⁽¹²⁾

34 The weakness of political support for the service often derives from what many believe to be one of its main strengths – its diverse and heterogeneous character. Courses leading to qualifications related to industrial need, and remedial and compensatory provision for 'disadvantaged' groups are generally understood and supported because they seem to have immediate economic or social value, but many councillors, officers and ratepayers are less happy about committing public funds to courses concerned with personal interests or which appear to be generally therapeutic or recreational. Some argue that while expenditure on schools benefits virtually everyone, adult general education benefits only a few; and those benefits are not, as distinct from other social, health, and welfare services, directly related to need. Conversely, many adult educators consider that local councillors and finance committees, having little understanding of the nature and aims of adult general education, take purely short-term financial decisions without realising their longer term implications. One response to the Council's discussion paper *Present Imperfect* stated that:

"The most alarming element in our situation is the complete lack of informed knowledge or concern shown by councillors of both parties. Many still have the 'bridge and flower-arranging' mentality and obviously have not looked at a course programme for donkey's years. Can you wonder that we feel quite desperate at this time when we see twenty-five years of hard but creative work being thrown away."

Equally those who have to take the hard financial decisions often feel that field workers do not sufficiently appreciate the difficulties and dilemmas facing the decision makers. Amidst these conflicting views the clear fact remains that over 2 million adults in each full year (and it is not just the same people every year, since over 40 per cent of the adult population voluntarily engages in some form of organised learning at some time in adult life) show by their presence that adult general education has a contribution to make to their needs as individuals and as members of society. The nature and the value of the service which they receive needs to be made plain and clear to the wider public by those who are professionally responsible for the service.

V USE OF RESOURCES

35 In July 1980, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mr Mark Carlisle, said at a meeting of the Advisory Council:

"If a healthy stock of adult and continuing education is to be preserved, from which future development can grow, authorities need help and advice on how best to deploy their resources."

The following sections of the report discuss the main resource elements and make suggestions about their deployment which, it is hoped, will be considered by the local education authorities and their partners in the provision of adult general education. Many of the examples quoted derive from existing practice; much of what is said is not new, but it is important at the present time that good practice, whenever identified, should be as widely known as possible. It is equally important that sufficient funds continue to be allocated to maintain the key elements which are essential if the service is not to disintegrate; the specific conclusions at the end of the report seek to safeguard this *minimum threshold commitment* (see paragraphs 106 and 107).

QUALITY AND STANDARDS

36 Quality and standards must form part of any examination of a cost-effective economy of provision. Quality stems from the up-to-date subject expertise and the enthusiasm and teaching skills of part-time tutors, from the training and support given by the full-time professionally trained staff, and, as elsewhere in the public service, from the ultimate relevance to the recipients of what is offered. Standards in adult education have to be related to the provision of what is needed in the ways in which people want it, to assisting a wide variety of men and women with different backgrounds and different reasons for wanting to study to gain the educational experiences and competencies they want, and to make sure that their aims are both realistic and worthwhile. Quality and standards in adult education are not measurable simply in the terms of successes or failures in end-of-course examinations.

CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

37 Financial resources for adult general education are scarce and getting scarcer. Regrettable as this may be, the implications are clear. The scarcer the resources the greater the need for effective co-operation among the various partners in the provision at national, regional and, especially, local levels.

Schools and colleges are directly or indirectly involved as well as local adult education centres, and consequently there is a need for more effective co-ordination within the appropriate sections of the Department of Education and Science. Because other government departments and national bodies are increasingly engaged in the education and training of adults more effective co-operation and co-ordination is needed between the Department of Education and Science and the Home Office, the Manpower Services Commission, the Health Education Council, the Sports and Arts Councils and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. It seems inconsistent, for example, to be spending more on 'law and order' services whilst simultaneously reducing provision for education in prisons.

- 38 At regional level, the Regional Advisory Councils for Further Education have been successful in helping to ensure that there is neither significant short-fall nor unnecessary overlap in college provision for work-related courses at different levels, and over recent years the RACs have shown that they can extend this influence to adult general education by promoting inter-authority co-operation, particularly in the vital area of staff training.⁽¹³⁾ In view of this success it is hoped that the economic pressures now increasingly bearing on RACs will not result in any disruption in their important provision for regional co-ordination, development and liaison amongst adult educators. Local education authorities have in the past consulted together regionally so as to maintain some consistency in the level of fees charged to students, but unfortunately many authorities no longer conform to any regional recommendations on fee levels or recoupment agreements.
- 39 It is at local authority and centre level that co-operation and co-ordination are perhaps most necessary, especially when funds are so limited. The local authority needs to provide appropriate machinery for bringing together those who have the knowledge of the main needs of the area and those who have resources to help meet those needs. The local authority's obligation is to 'secure the provision of adequate facilities', not to make the full provision by itself. The Responsible Bodies – mainly university adult education departments and the districts of the Workers' Educational Association – have developed a nationwide pattern of work in their own areas of provision, which is financially supported from national and local government funds. Much professional teaching skill and knowledge of local needs are to be found in local authority social services, housing, and leisure service departments.

the probation service, and in industry. The Health Authorities are concerned with health education and employ health education officers to develop it, and they often welcome and help finance courses for the handicapped and those in hospitals. Some industrial concerns are prepared to finance and accommodate courses in pre-retirement, or English as a second language, or health at work, tailored to the needs of their own employees but not necessarily restricted exclusively to them. The library service can help with publicity, student advice, books and occasionally with premises and it has an especially important role in 'open access' and 'distance' learning schemes for which it can provide reading and other study materials, together with micro-copying and other technical facilities. In addition there are the numerous voluntary organisations whose circumstances and contributions are discussed more fully later. Many local authority social service departments, health authorities and voluntary organisations are, for example, engaged in work with pre-school play groups, where co-operation and co-ordination are obviously beneficial to all.

- 40 Local education authorities should establish suitable co-ordinating machinery for their area on which the main partners and organisations are represented, so that they can determine within their combined resources the particular contributions of each party. This body should also be aware of all the available sources of outside funding, whether from the Home Office, the Manpower Services Commission, the European Economic Community, the urban aid programme, the inner-city partnership scheme, the national and local charitable foundations, or elsewhere. This kind of co-ordinating body cannot have a guarantee that the local authority will be able to finance whatever it may recommend, but it can at least help to ensure that its recommendations and the reasoning behind them are known to the authority's education committee *before* any crucial financial decisions are taken. The aim should be to achieve through mutual awareness, co-operation, and co-ordinated planning, the best possible response to identified need.
- 41 Local development councils of the type recommended by the Russell committee⁽¹⁴⁾ have not been formed in all areas, nor, where they have been formed, have they always been an unqualified success. But when they work well they undoubtedly have a big contribution to make.⁽¹⁵⁾ One participating body described the functioning of the local development council in its area as follows:

". . . the LDC has accomplished the following: the co-ordination of adult education provision and the agreement of all agencies to joint publicity, exhibitions at enrolment times, liaison over fees, administration and programming; co-ordination and development of numerous community adult education projects; the establishment of a major counselling and information service with a full-time co-ordinator, part-time professional counsellors, and the use of the Open University computer-based information system; the representation on the LDC of a whole range of interested outside organisations including the Churches, the Trades Council, numerous voluntary associations for youth, women and ethnic minority groups; and elected representatives of the LDC on the governing bodies of local centres. All this and much more testifies to the positive innovative and integrative potential of local development councils".

The statement concluded by saying that:

". . . the effectiveness of the arrangement in getting the best possible value from available resources has helped to improve the public image of the service locally".

- 42 Equally important are arrangements for co-operation and co-ordination between individual adult centres and the further education college and secondary schools serving their area. There is also scope for local centres to work more closely with the long-term adult education residential colleges and particularly to co-operate with, and make the fullest use of, the short-term colleges. These colleges are an invaluable national educational resource whose use and support by local centres can only be mutually beneficial (see paragraph 72).
- 43 Over recent years there has been more awareness of each others' area of concern and problems among adult centre heads, college staff, social and health workers, personnel officers in industrial organisations, and the staff of Responsible Bodies and voluntary organisations. To get the best value from available resources within existing constraints there is a need for continuing co-operation and mutual help among field workers. Without this, any more official planning at local authority level can at best be only partially effective.

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBLE BODY · RELATIONSHIPS

- 44 Adult education has inevitably seemed a very small part of the provision of local education authorities who, when allocating expenditure, do not usually regard it as important as the work of the schools and colleges. For the Responsible Bodies, on the

other hand, and especially the districts of the Workers' Educational Association, adult general education is central to their whole existence. The local education authorities have generally been sympathetic to the work of the Responsible Bodies, and most authorities have given some financial support to this work. In return the local authorities have benefited from the work of the organising tutors employed by the Responsible Bodies, who have often been able to act in effect as agents for the local authority in part of their area of joint concern. Some university adult education departments have also helped local authorities in the training of full-time organisers and part-time tutors. Co-operation between local authority centre heads and Responsible Body staff is often good in such matters as course programming, joint publicity, and use of accommodation and equipment, but there are many areas where collaboration might be much more effective; the extension of the WEA's work with 'disadvantaged' adults, for example, offers obvious scope for joint planning and staff training.

45 The principle of local authority support for the work of the Responsible Bodies accords with national policy, so far as this has been given positive expression. It is regrettable that some authorities have not felt able to maintain this support in recent years, particularly to the WEA whose district provision is being increasingly affected. Apart from financial grant, the way in which the local authorities can most obviously help the Responsible Bodies is by providing free accommodation and access to equipment and other physical facilities in local centres. One unfortunate result of recent pressures on local government finance has been the decision by some authorities either to introduce rental charges for the use of rooms by Responsible Bodies or even to withhold these facilities altogether. The speedy return to a more neighbourly and supporting relationship is clearly desirable.

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

46 Many voluntary organisations are actively engaged in particular aspects of adult general education – women's institutes, townswomen's guilds, young farmers' clubs, community associations, pre-school playgroup associations, marriage guidance councils, and many cultural, religious and sports organisations, retired people's clubs, and charitable foundations. These voluntary associations often have direct knowledge of community educational need because of the very localised nature of much of their work. A recent enquiry undertaken for the Advisory Council in the Lancaster/Morecambe

area has revealed over 150 separate voluntary societies with a total membership of over 12,000, and more than half of these societies claimed to be doing some educational work.(16)

47 Much of the present educational activity in voluntary organisations is assisted by grants from central government and the local education authorities. This support needs to be maintained and ways found to strengthen and enhance the educational outcomes of this valuable partnership between statutory and voluntary organisations. Lady Young, Minister of State for Education and Science, said in April 1980:

"Voluntary organisations rely on support from local education authorities . . . they need a steady basis from which to work and on which to rely when seeking resources. I would ask (the local authorities) to bear in mind that what is a tiny part of their budget may be crucial to the voluntary bodies and may be one of the most cost effective uses of the local authorities' resources".

Voluntary organisations are a source of enthusiasm and self-generating energy, contributing to the variety and the stability of many of our social institutions. The stimulation and reinforcement of voluntary effort makes good economic sense because it helps to gain the best value from the additional resources provided by the voluntary element. Some of the more obvious ways in which local authorities can help this work are by:

- providing access to premises and equipment: suitable premises at minimal cost are often vital for the work of voluntary societies, especially in places which have no community centre buildings;
- providing administrative support and helping with publicity: one authority, for example, which provides office accommodation and administrative support for voluntary organisations in the County Hall, thereby assists the co-ordination of work by both partners to achieve a better application of voluntary efforts;
- helping to train volunteer leaders and workers: this can often be done, in part at least, within authorities' own staff training schemes;
- providing specialist support and advice: some authorities, for example, employ a specialist adviser of rural home economics to work in close association with the women's institutes;
- supplying tutors on particular subjects at the specific request of voluntary groups.

Very often voluntary groups need some initial financial help to get established, but thereafter any continuing grant needed may be relatively small. The prime needs are for secure basic funding for the administration of the organisation, and close person-to-person contact between voluntary workers and professional staff.

48 It would be mutually beneficial for local education authorities to invite voluntary organisations to examine their actual and potential role in adult general education, so as to plan with them how this can best be developed. The Open University in 1980 provided courses for some 15,000 students in collaboration with volunteer networks, often using premises and other facilities provided by LEAs. One LEA has delegated to the Women's Institutes responsibility for adult general education in rural areas. One county Federation of Women's Institutes is developing study circles for women throughout its area. Using funds made available under the inner-city partnership programme another authority has been willing to offer grant and professional help to any voluntary group formed for a community purpose which involves adult learning. These are just a few of the examples which can be quoted. In July 1980 the Secretary of State for Education and Science in speaking to the Advisory Council said:

"At its best the voluntary contribution can be flexible, innovative, responsive to community needs, informal, and able to contact those disenchanted with formal education".

It might be added that these are qualities which should be demonstrated by the public provision for adult general education as a whole. Mr Carlisle went on to say that:

"Ideally the voluntary sector and the maintained sector should complement and support each other".

The Advisory Council strongly agrees with that statement.

49 Co-operation has to be based on a free partnership. It is the independent character of voluntary organisations which gives them their real strength. Disruptive tensions inevitably arise when a local authority for its own reasons of accountability seeks to control or direct the work of a voluntary organisation. Voluntary organisations usually welcome not only material help but also professional advice from local authority staff provided that this is offered with sensitivity and understanding, and that the voluntary bodies' staff are not regarded as being responsible to the local authorities' professionals.

50 Unfortunately the scarcer the resources the greater the strains on the co-operative arrangements among the various partners

in adult education. There is more reluctance to share accommodation, equipment, and other resources when these are strictly limited and there is no assurance of future funds to replace them. Strains are even greater when staff regard their work as being threatened, with neither firm funding nor any consistent policies to support them. Reasonable evidence of national and local commitment to, and belief in, the adult education service is imperative if a wider voluntary organisation contribution is to be encouraged. New ideas for co-operation need to be canvassed, and new schemes made widely known.

ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 51 A better service and better value from the available resources can be achieved if centre heads and committees are not obliged to work within centrally imposed and restrictive regulations. To encourage flexibility and devolve control to local centres some authorities have introduced systems of net budgeting, in which the authority accepts responsibility for meeting certain agreed costs and an agreed deficit, whilst leaving the individual centre free to make its own course arrangements, to fix and collect student fees, to determine its own 'letting' and 'club affiliation' fees, and to manage its own accounts. Centres then decide for themselves where to exercise virement within their own heads of expenditure, and any balance of funds is carried forward from one academic session or financial year to the next. For this devolution to work effectively and efficiently, the centre needs a good managing body to make decisions in consultation with the centre head and its own student community, to agree priorities within particular educational needs and the available funds, and to keep proper minutes and records – often with voluntary help from members of the centre, which can itself be a learning experience.
- 52 Reservations have been expressed about some net budgeting systems. The need to meet fixed income targets can lead to an imbalance in centre programmes, with a preponderance of popular courses to bring in higher fee income, and a corresponding reduction in many educationally desirable courses which attract neither large student numbers nor those who can pay high fees. Net budgeting can lead to disparities not only in provision but in the charges made to students and sometimes in the rates of pay offered to part-time tutors for similar activities in different centres in adjoining areas. Some centres have been required to operate a net budget system whilst having to maintain the authority's regulations about minimum

class sizes, minimum student contributions, set periods for tuition, and so on. In other instances authorities have progressively reduced their own proportion of the total costs of maintaining the centres so that the term 'net budget' comes to be seen as a euphemism for the gradual withdrawal of subvention. By the very fact that net budgeting offers greater freedom of decision making at the level of the local adult education centre, it creates further difficulties for the movement of students across local authority boundaries, since inter-authority recoupment arrangements become impossibly complicated without an authority-wide fee structure.

53 It is evident enough that net budgeting systems offer both advantages and disadvantages, but it is important to remember that they are operational means and not educational ends. In introducing them authorities need to be clear about the aims of their adult education service so that the freedom conferred is an added strength and not a further weakness. Centres should not be confined in a strait-jacket of regulations; instead they should have reasonable freedom to work within approved budget levels. To get the best value from limited resources seems to require at least that:

- there is no obligation for each and every course to achieve a minimum enrolment; the range and quality of provision will benefit even if this is merely replaced by a requirement for minimum *average* class attendance;
- there is freedom to employ paid tutors and the services of volunteers in ways best suited to individual courses and to groups within the community.

54 The development of self-help, self-reliance and the capacity for both group and private study should be one measure of the success of adult education. Many study circles are self-organised, self-programming and to a large extent self-teaching. Often their main need is for suitable rooms with access to central resources, and with the opportunity to call on professional help or tuition when required. Provided that there is no harmful dilution of teaching nor any reduction in student and tutor contact where it is needed, self-programming groups should be encouraged. Many independently formed clubs and societies particularly need accommodation and equipment to practise and develop their own educational provision. The village school may offer the only public facility for badminton or country dancing; the secondary school hall may be the only theatre available to the local drama group, or the school swimming pool may be the only stretch of water within reach of the diving or water-polo club. These associations are often

keen to affiliate to the local adult centre, to contribute to its social life, and to make a fair contribution to the cost of using premises and equipment. Many authorities encourage, within the limits of accommodation available, these self-programming and 'affiliated' clubs and assess a reasonable charge for the facilities used. Others unfortunately try to levy charges comparable to the more sophisticated and commercially run sports complexes, which are specifically planned for 'drop-in' use (in the way that most school and college facilities are not) and whose users are not required to form their own groups and do their own planning to fit the limitations of access, equipment and other facilities.

55 Centres should be strongly encouraged to form their own students' associations. These should in turn be encouraged to raise funds of their own, which the associations themselves should be allowed to dispose as they think best. This will help to widen participation in the work of the centre, and generally be of direct benefit to its surrounding community. To *require* centres to raise funds locally is a different matter. Many centre heads would neither welcome nor excel in the job of a fund-raising 'entrepreneur', which would consume time and energy better used in their main educational task. Anything which increases the *dependence* of adult education provision on local fund raising is likely to raise more barriers to access and to reduce the range of provision, to the inevitable disadvantage of the poorer and less well-educated communities.

STUDENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

56 When the Advisory Council was established the Department of Education and Science stressed to it the advantages for the adult education service of focussing attention more clearly on adults rather than on institutions. One obvious way of moving in that direction is to increase student and community involvement in managing the work and life of individual adult education centres; in that respect net budgeting arrangements can be helpful. Much local authority provision for adults has been rooted in the tradition of the school system. Students, accustomed to accept a school-type relationship between teacher and taught, between the controllers and the controlled, are not likely to seek positive involvement in, and control of, their own centres and programmes. This traditionally institutionalised system tends towards the principle that the local authority and the centre head know what is best for the students and how this should be provided. Nevertheless, there is an increasing movement in favour of engaging students and members of the local community more directly in the management of centres. More

local authorities might, with advantage, encourage this active participation of students. The policy and practice of the institutions in membership of the Educational Centres Association, and of the branch organisation of the WEA, encourages greater student participation in management and in day-to-day administrative routines; this can be efficient and economical and at the same time has its own educational dimension. Many other voluntary organisations such as the Pre-School Play-groups Association view their courses as a self-help exercise planned and executed by the members, often in collaboration with the local education authority. The concept of community education implies the involvement of local people in the planning and execution of their own provision and programmes, with the minimum of outside control. Some communities clearly need more help and guidance in this than others. Student associations can help with information and publicity, enrolment arrangements, the provision and running of the centre library and coffee bar, the arrangement of exhibitions, concerts and other cultural events, the promotion of amateur drama, theatre visits and excursions and in a host of other ways. The Russell report stated that:

"In every community there are resources of voluntary energy, either latent or already formed into clubs and associations",

and recommended appropriate legislation to facilitate wider community and student involvement in centre management.⁽¹⁷⁾

57 The aim must be to encourage the greatest possible measure of community involvement and participation consistent with the local education authorities' legal responsibilities and fiscal regulations, so as to improve the cultural and educational life of local communities. There is nowadays growing evidence in many countries of a movement towards individual self-determination and self-management in educational matters. Indeed, community issues and community development are being seen as an effective practical basis for adult political and social education. The close involvement of students and community widens awareness of the purpose of the adult education service and enlists more local support for it. In increasing community support and voluntary involvement the lead has to be taken by those with the required experience and expertise, but care should be taken to see that the centre's affairs are not directed by a small coterie of influential members who promote only the interests of those, like themselves, already in organised groups and classes, while ignoring the interests of the wider community.

58 The preceding paragraphs have considered the advantages and the difficulties of devolved financial management and self-reliant approaches to the planning and running of learning activities as far as adult education centres are concerned. It is acknowledged that matters affecting, for example, financial control and student participation in decision-making are likely to be more constrained where adult general education is provided through part of a larger institution, as in a further education college or a community college. The regulations governing the overall work and accountability of those colleges, and the different categories of users being provided for, obviously present inherent difficulties in seeking to achieve greater flexibility and more participative management in the provision of adult general education. The Russell committee considered some of these organisational difficulties and found no easy way through them, not least because of the statutory provision for the governing bodies of schools and colleges, but the Advisory Council would agree with the Russell report's conclusion that:

"What is important is that the voices of those most closely concerned with the organisation should be heard and that their advice should in all reasonable circumstances be followed".(18)

FULL-TIME STAFF

59 Adult education does not thrive on bureaucratic structures, but it does need a core of experienced professional staff who understand the dynamics of the service, know about the development of educational groups, and appreciate the needs of adult students.(19) The small cadre of full-time organisers is without doubt the 'seed-corn' of the service. They are at its heart. The training of part-time tutors and leaders, both paid and voluntary, on which the standards and quality of the service largely depend, are in the hands of these full-time staff. The professional expertise which has been carefully built into the service over the last twenty years, and the impetus for future re-building and development, will be lost unless local education authorities acknowledge the need to retain a basic minimum of experienced staff. In 1963 the Ministry of Education, in the one piece of positive central guidance given to local authorities in this connection,(20) recommended a full-time appointment wherever there was an enrolment of 1,000 or more students. The overall ratio of full-time staff which this implies has still to be achieved.

60 There is a clear correlation between the ratio of full-time organising staff employed and the level of adult student enrolment. An area with 100,000 population served by two full-time organisers is likely to have nearly twice as many adult students enrolled as a similar area with only one full-time organiser. To dispense with the services of the full-time professional staff is the surest and quickest way to extinguish the best features of the service. The population patterns of different areas vary considerably but as a general guide the Advisory Council recommends that *under present circumstances* each local education authority should employ not less than one full-time adult education specialist for every 30,000 of the adult population; this size of population is likely to produce about 2,000 students at any given time.(21) This should, of course, be apart from those officers employed to deal specifically with literacy and other aspects of 'basic' skill provision for 'disadvantaged' groups, and those full-time specialist *teachers* who may be employed to cover key subject areas such as arts and crafts and modern languages. The full-time organisers and centre heads see the provision for their districts as a whole, which allows them to plan in a co-ordinated and systematic fashion.

61 The fact that some authorities have recently made disproportionate and, in some places, seemingly ill-considered reductions in their provision for adult general education has obviously affected the morale of the small number of full-time organising staff. Insecurity inevitably leads to excessive caution about development and innovation. Furthermore, the unsatisfactory method of determining rates of pay for full-time staff in adult general education, which were criticised in the Russell report, still persists. In essence the problem centres around the lack of any clearly applicable salary scales and the consequent resort to ad hoc or analogous scales from the further education college or other sectors. Since the placing on these scales is generally derived from such criteria as the number of full-time student hours and the level of work defined by recognised examinations, that relevance to adult general education can often be tenuous. The Russell committee's description of the difficulties and their proposals for resolving them are still valid.(22)

PART-TIME STAFF

62 The Russell report said that:

"In every community there are great resources of knowledge, skill and special expertise, and an adult education service of sufficient range and flexibility can be achieved only by mobilising these".(23)

colleges should be supported in their work, that they should seek still closer links with local adult education centres across the country, and that local education authorities contemplating closures should consider most carefully the balance between the small, short-term, local financial gains and the large, long-term, national losses. There are also other short-term residential centres run by voluntary bodies, for example the churches, which, whilst they are not primarily educational establishments, could be more widely used for general educational purposes in association with adult education organisations.

BUILDINGS

73 Acceptance of the principle that educational premises should be fully and economically used has greatly benefited adult general education. Since the early 1960s much has been written and said about getting the best possible community benefit from educational plant and equipment. Most of this has been provided specifically for school children or for the vocational needs of young people immediately after leaving school. Little has been provided specifically for adult general education and consequently the service depends largely on the residual use of school buildings. A growing number of local education authorities rightly believe that these buildings should be administered to meet the wider educational needs of the whole community, and that it should be axiomatic to allow everybody with bona-fide educational needs ready access to educational facilities which have been paid for from the community purse. However, only a minority of local education authorities have yet devised a considered policy for the community use of school and college buildings. The Advisory Council considers that every local authority should formulate and publicise its policy for community access to educational premises. Many educational bodies, and especially voluntary organisations, rely on suitable accommodation being available at minimal cost. Understandably, they see a fundamental paradox in education authorities levying high charges for the use of publicly owned buildings for educational provision to which there is open public access. The Advisory Council fully realises that there may be additional costs in making premises available to 'outside' bodies, but when the proposed use is for educational purposes, the marginal costs of extending the use of existing buildings are still likely to be extremely low in relation to the benefits gained.

74 In the larger towns the further education colleges, polytechnics and universities generally make accommodation and facilities

available. The post-1945 secondary schools have a wide range of specialist facilities which make them particularly suited to adult general education, especially when they are geographically convenient for the communities they serve. For many communities however, the only conveniently available building is the local primary school and this, in country areas especially, often forms a natural focal point. The community primary schools in Cambridgeshire and the Van Leer schools in Birmingham show how useful primary schools can be for adult education; and how in return the local communities can render all manner of voluntary help to the schools and their children. The accommodation in local communities need not be limited to schools. Many have community centres. Many branch libraries have a room or rooms available for adult education. Village and church halls, working mens clubs, factories and offices, can all at times offer valuable facilities.

- 75 All adult education centres should preferably have at least some premises of their own, so as to create a welcoming adult atmosphere, to offer more scope for innovation, to promote a centre 'identity', to provide day-time courses, and to encourage 'self-help' and student involvement in the general life of the centre.⁽²⁸⁾ Where the 'community school' approach is genuinely adopted this further co-operation between the schools and the adult community can foster the idea of the continuity of the educational process. But whatever buildings are used, the adult education centre should have some minimum area or base which its adult students can regard as their own. The Advisory Council considers that all authorities should take advantage of every opportunity to provide some accommodation in schools for adult and community education purposes.
- 76 The buildings used for adult education should be as conveniently situated as is consistent with reasonable economy. But there is no point in having convenient buildings with a friendly and 'adult' atmosphere, if they are not open when people can use them. Many people – the elderly, shift workers, the handicapped, and women with domestic commitments – are unable to attend in the evening and would welcome day-time provision. Without suitable day-time provision, many women who do not get work-related educational opportunities are bound to be at an even greater disadvantage. The accelerating decline in the number of school pupils provides a splendid opportunity to increase the amount of available day-time accommodation at comparatively small cost. To adapt spare accommodation, wherever appropriate, for adult use

and retain it within the authority's pool of educational plant means that the authority can, apart from anything else, retain its flexibility against the growth of educational need for any particular age group in the future. All local education authorities should consider the needs of adult education before deciding that any educational accommodation is surplus and disposable.

77 Sharing a school, like sharing a house, is easier in theory than in practice. Schoolteachers tell of "*keep-fit classes damaging equipment in gymnasias, adults fusing power systems or spoiling children's work by inconsiderate use of classrooms, and adult teams taking short-cuts across the school gardens to the playing fields*",⁽²⁹⁾ whilst adult education staff frequently complain that they are the 'last to know' about decisions made by others and affecting the premises, rooms and equipment on which their students rely. Some adult students complain that day school staff make them feel unwelcome. Problems arise over rival claims for limited accommodation, over the dual use of specialist equipment and facilities and, perhaps most especially, over the problems of storage of materials and half-finished craft products.

78 Local education authorities should have a clear code of acceptable practice to minimise the potential for misunderstanding and conflict. Heads of day schools and adult centres should meet regularly to discuss the problems resulting from the shared use of premises. Sectional control should be kept to a minimum. 'My school' may be laudable enough when it refers to a body of pupils and staff, but not when it implies proprietary rights over buildings and equipment at all times. Local education authorities usually apportion to their adult education budget part of the charges relating to the provision and maintenance of buildings and equipment; this should be made clear to all the parties involved. There are many examples of sensible local authority approaches to this problem, dating back to the policies implemented by the West Riding of Yorkshire more than twenty years ago.

79 No formal code of practice is, however, likely to be effective without good personal relationships between staff of the day school and the adult centre, and the latter need to remember that it is usually the day school head who is responsible to the authority for the buildings and furniture which were designed primarily for use by school children, often for very small children as the muscular cramp experienced by many adult students will testify. Much depends on appointing to both areas of work people with sufficient breadth of outlook and

educational understanding. The 'community college' approach can be especially valuable if the head or warden understands the needs and practices of adult education and is appointed with overall responsibility for both school and adult provision.⁽³⁰⁾ Some of the larger sports and leisure complexes built in association with secondary schools and designed for dual use by school and adult community, have justified the appointment of professional managers who relieve the day school head and the adult principal of the burdens of administering the joint use of the facilities.

- 80 The use of educational premises obviously incurs running costs, which have increased rapidly in recent years, but many elements of these – capital loan charges, rates, and building maintenance – have to be met irrespective of the amount of use. The object should be to get the maximum benefit from the capital investment while keeping the *additional* revenue costs to a minimum. The alternative is to leave expensive plant under-used, which means higher unit costs and the loss of a valuable resource to the community which provided it. There is some evidence to show that longer hours of use result in a lower incidence of damage through vandalism. High running costs can lead to high 'letting' charges which in turn restrict the use of buildings, just as high student fees result in lower enrolments.
- 81 The additional expenditure arising from adult and community use is largely made up of heating and caretaking costs. Since weekend and evening use is often restricted to certain parts of buildings, authorities need flexible control over heating systems. Arrangements need to be made to allow for the heating of only those areas actually in use. Considerable savings can be made by the better management of heating systems, by concentrating adult education provision in parts of buildings, and by concentrating attendance on specific evenings. In some places there can be a significant fall-off in attendance in the coldest weather of January and February, which might suggest that, without damage to the service, limited reductions of provision in these months could be balanced by additional and extended activity in the spring and summer, through conventional evening courses and through more full-day or half-day courses both during the week and at week-ends. Caretaking is expensive and many caretakers, particularly the more elderly, do not always welcome the compulsory evening and week-end overtime which adult education can impose on them. Where both day and evening use is heavy and regular, the evening caretaking should be

organised; as in the further education colleges, as part of the normal job and not a burdensome extra duty. Caretaking appointments, levels of staffing, and methods of payment should take account of all the educational purposes for which buildings may be used. In making these suggestions the Advisory Council is not advocating the reduction of overhead costs at the expense of educational provision; the aim must always be to contain overhead costs so as to free more resources for maintaining and developing educational provision.

CHARGES TO STUDENTS

82 The 1944 Education Act clearly intended that adult general education should be supported from public funds. The Act requires local authorities, as public bodies responsible for a statutory public service, to secure provision for *any* persons able and willing to benefit from it, not to secure only such provision as can be sustained at the students' own expense by those who can afford to meet the costs. Nevertheless, the misunderstanding of the 'recreational' nature of the adult education service and the financial crises of the last few years have combined to prompt the contention that student fees can properly be raised to the point where the service is largely self-financing. To argue this is to deny the educational needs of much of the adult population: nothing is more calculated to turn the service into a middle-class preserve where only the popular and profitable activities survive. The three principles which have become generally accepted and applied in the public adult education service since 1945 are that:

- students should ordinarily be expected to make some contribution to the cost of the provision;
- fees charged to adult students and entitlements to remissions of fees should take account of each individual adult's capacity to pay;
- there should be a significant element of subsidy from public funds.

83 The costs of formal educational provision requiring regular tuition can be divided into two main and now roughly equal components:

- organisational and administrative costs; provision of buildings and equipment and related expenditure: salaries of full-time organising and tutorial staff: costs of publicity, secretarial support and central administration;
- direct teaching costs, which are mostly made up of part-time tutors' salaries.

Since most adults contribute through rates and taxes to the Rate Support Grant and the local education rate precept, it is reasonable even in present circumstances for the first component to be borne fully by the providing authority, which should then determine the *reasonable proportion* of direct teaching costs to be borne by the students through fees. Those clubs and societies which only use educational plant and equipment for their own activities, without any regular teaching requirement, should be expected to pay charges more clearly related to the costs arising *directly* from that usage; this might include the appropriate share of the costs of heating, lighting, caretaking, cleaning, wear and tear on equipment and internal fabric, but should exclude rates and capital loan charges. This is not to suggest there should be any positive discrimination in charges against clubs and societies, whose members also pay taxes and rates, but simply to propose an equitable and identifiable formula through which their educational activities may continue to be publicly encouraged and supported.

84 In advocating this approach the Advisory Council would stress that:

- Remission should be granted to those who cannot reasonably afford to pay the standard fee: the non-earners and their dependants – those still in full-time education, the unemployed, the retired and the handicapped. These of course include some people who can afford to pay the standard fee but they are few in relation to the total number and a 'means test' to identify them is undesirable.
- Fee remission should ordinarily be given to educationally disadvantaged groups and persons in respect of provision for basic education and skills.
- Fee levels should be kept within the students' *psychological* as well as their economic reach, so that no additional discouragement is offered to those with the least in the way of financial or educational means.

There obviously needs to be some local flexibility in setting fee levels to take account of the different circumstances of specific courses and particular communities and persons. At the same time there seems to be no educational, social or indeed logical justification for the present very wide variations in fees charged for broadly similar provision in different places.(12)

85 The sharp increase in fees over recent years has led some authorities to review the arrangements for their payment. Many students, who could pay 50p or 60p for an evening's attendance, are less willing to pay £15 or £20 in one instalment

for a full course. It may be unlikely that many authorities will follow the example of the local education authority which has installed a ticket system for some students to pay week-by-week for each separate attendance, but it is desirable that fees should be payable in manageable instalments. The familiar argument which equates adult education's hourly fees with the price of a packet of cigarettes or a pint of beer is misleading and spurious when the equivalent to a full enrolment fee can be the equivalent of 20 packets of cigarettes or 3 gallons of beer. Even the most committed smokers and drinkers are likely to be discouraged from making that kind of bulk purchase; there is no justification for *requiring* adult students to pay for their education in bulk. Easy payment systems need to be the rule and not the exception.

INTER-AUTHORITY RECOUPMENT

86 The object of recouptment arrangements is to maximise the available adult education opportunities by ensuring the widest possible access to local education authority provision irrespective of the authority area in which students may reside. These arrangements allow 'out-county' students to enrol in courses provided by authorities other than their own resident authority and to pay the same fees as resident students, since the balance of the costs of provision is recouped from the 'out-county' students' authorities. The increasingly severe financial pressures being experienced by local education authorities have led most of them, particularly those which are 'net exporters' of students, to reconsider these 'open-ended' arrangements. Some have adopted the simple solution of declining to pay any recouptment charges.⁽³¹⁾ As a result adults seeking courses outside the boundaries of their own local authority can increasingly expect to be charged very high unsubsidised fees. This clearly reduces student choice and in conurbations which are tightly sub-divided by local education authority boundaries it can quickly lead to the under-use of city centre specialist premises and facilities as suburban commuters are priced away. If the aim is to encourage rather than obstruct student participation, authorities must seek to restore working arrangements with their neighbours so that students can cross authority boundaries without financial discrimination. There is some recently published evidence⁽³²⁾ which argues that the savings apparently achieved by charging higher fees to, and thereby often excluding, 'outside' students may in fact be nullified by the consequent loss of the ordinary level fee payments by these students.

INDEPENDENT PROVISION AND SPONSORSHIP

87 A lot of adult education is provided by independent institutions on either a profit-making or a non-profit-seeking basis. These institutions are broadly of two types: the relatively new and not insignificant movement by hotels and holiday centres to offer educational and 'activity' holiday courses in order to make use of residential accommodation not otherwise designed or used for educational purposes – educational provision being a secondary aim of the provider; and the much larger and longer established sector of independent colleges and correspondence schools with the primary aim of providing education and training for adults mainly in such vocational areas as secretarial skills, languages, accountancy, and skills needing individual instruction, as in learning to drive or to dance. It is to the credit of the commercial sector that correspondence education has for many years benefited hundreds of thousands of adults in Britain. Its achievements have been largely ignored by the public education sector. Fortunately the whole area of correspondence education and 'learning at a distance' is now beginning to be more highly regarded, and the excellent and well publicised work of the Open University and the National Extension College (respectively a publicly financed body and a non-profit-seeking independent trust) have shown how this 'distance' provision can both complement and supplement the local provision of the conventional public sector. The latter has much to learn from the private sector in the ways of responding efficiently and effectively to public demand: in the frequency and flexibility of course starting dates, in responding to the immediate and essential learning requirements of the students, and in clarifying the students' study aims.

88 This is not to claim that commercial provision is superior to public provision, but simply that to survive it has to react sensitively to demand. As Williams and Woodhall show in their pioneering study of independent further education,⁽³³⁾ there is a considerable turnover of institutions in the private sector because of failure to match the expectations of their students. Market forces provide the public accountability of the private sector, and market criteria determine the nature and scope of its provision. Thus it does not follow that the enforced reduction of the public sector will be automatically off-set, at no public cost, by the growth of the private sector: nor indeed that it is in itself desirable that this should happen. It is in the public interest that there should be a healthy and diverse private sector in adult education to complement and supplement the public sector. But there must continue to be a mixed economy,

in which the public education service has an obligation to play the main part so that public funds continue to ensure through the mechanism of student choice the greatest diversity and highest standards of provision. It needs to be remembered that some of the provision made in the public sector is already self-financing, and shifting this to the private sector would not relieve any of the demands on public funds. The private sector cannot ever by its very nature replace public provision, and it is a grave disservice to both sectors to suggest that either is dispensable.

89 Increasingly it is being suggested that the public service might enlist more commercial sponsorship to finance its activities. This does not seem to be a very wide practice at present and its practical limitations over guarantees of continuity and freedom from educational interference could lead to difficulties. However the principle is not in itself objectionable, always provided that this form of funding is used to supplement rather than to replace public funding. Sponsorship is well suited to 'one off' events such as exhibitions and concerts, and such clearly identifiable costs as advertising and the printing of prospectuses. The Council is nevertheless clear that the pursuit of sponsorship, or of any other kind of external fund raising, must not be allowed to dominate the work and time of adult education staff whose main concerns must remain directly educational. No public service can retain the confidence of its staff, nor can the staff continue to work competently, if the public importance of their work is undermined by any significant shift from public to private funding.

DISTANCE LEARNING

90 Not all students are able or would choose to enrol for 'live' courses in adult centres or colleges, and a growing number of institutions are willing to consider 'distance learning' and 'open access' learning schemes. Until recently in adult general education most of the provision for distance learning has been made through the Open University, the National Extension College, the correspondence courses offered by commercial and other agencies, and the courses provided by the broadcasting authorities. Realisation of the educational potential of the latest developments in technology – tape and video recorders, computers and calculators, micro-circuits and videotex systems – has stimulated a much wider interest amongst a growing number of colleges and centres. There are many sources of high quality independent learning and distance teaching materials already available to colleges and centres, and new developments need not therefore be con-

strained by lack of materials. The advantages of distance learning are that students can:

- enrol for study at any time;
- enrol in an institution of their choice irrespective of its geographical proximity;
- study in places and at times of their own choosing.

On the other hand, not all adults are necessarily able to study effectively through centrally provided materials. It is a demanding way to study, putting a high premium on strength of purpose and literacy skills, and many people are accustomed to regard learning as dependent on the presence of a good teacher and the support derived from fellow students.

91 Distance learning can result in less interaction between teacher and students. Many distance learning schemes with open access prefer the 'multi-media' approach whereby the 'distance' learning elements are linked to some face-to-face tuition and occasional contact with other students. The National Extension College has developed 'Flexistudy' in partnership with a number of local colleges, whereby the NEC is the materials production centre and the local college uses the materials to set up the distance teaching programme and provides assignment marking, tutorials, library, laboratory, examination and other facilities for the students to use as they need them. At the end of 1980 there were over 50 colleges providing 750 courses for more than 5,000 students under this scheme.

92 The development of distance learning is currently limited in several ways. It usually requires a form of planning and a level of initial capital outlay beyond the capacities of most single institutions. The high-quality purpose-designed materials can be expensive to produce and so need to be extensively used. There are no accepted mechanisms for co-ordinating provision at the same academic level among largely autonomous institutions set up to meet local needs. Local authority accounting procedures do not make it easy to spend large sums on developing materials in one year when the resultant income will only accrue in future years. The number and gradings of staff employed are usually calculated with reference to the amount of class teaching they do rather than to the amount of learning which they facilitate, and there is no agreed formula to calculate enrolments from distance learning provision. It calls for an efficient administrative base and a well equipped learning resource centre, both adequately staffed, and a clear network of communication, with arrangements for

recording queries and responding quickly to students' problems, for introductory meetings and for proper guidance.

93 Distance learning does not offer either a cheap or a complete alternative to provision in local centres. It certainly increases opportunities for students by providing other methods of study, and it can add to the resources available to local tutors and voluntary groups. To be really effective and economical a distance learning system needs to have developed, as rapidly as funds allow, a nationally co-ordinated network of provision covering key subjects.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

94 The idea of 'resource centres' to support a comprehensive system of distance teaching draws attention to the growing contribution which can be made to adult education by the public library service. Many public libraries already help independent learners by providing books and other materials, micro-film and copying facilities, and space and quiet for study. Following the American example, more librarians are prepared to take the necessary training to act as student advisers: some have rooms which are available for group learning: some librarians give a special service to the house-bound. Libraries need to have proper links and effective liaison with local adult centres, and, where they have particular facilities to offer, these need to be effectively publicised.

BROADCASTING

95 Much independent learning takes place through the stimulus of broadcasting. The success of the Open University and the adult literacy campaign has prompted suggestions that even more might be done through broadcasting to cater for the intervening spectrum of adult educational need. This is not to deny that a remarkable amount is already being provided through a wide variety of programmes, often linked to supporting publications and to locally-based courses. Without any increase in broadcast output there is still plenty of scope for the more efficient use of present resources through further use of educational broadcasts linked to publications and local courses.

96 When the fourth television channel goes on the air in October 1982 some 15 per cent of its programme time is expected to be educational broadcasting. How this educational broadcasting is defined will need careful scrutiny, but because the new channel will be broadcasting mainly in the peak viewing hours and because the Independent Broadcasting Authority pro-

poses to set up a central unit to stimulate follow-up and linked activities, the fourth channel could become the most substantial new resource for adult education in recent years. It will offer real opportunities for recruiting students and provide high quality resource materials for adult educators. In a time of diminishing local resources all educators should consider how best to use this new national channel most effectively.

- 97 Broadcasting, and especially television, contributes to adult education in a variety of ways. Many programmes shown for their intrinsic interest or entertainment value are often 'educative'; series like *Horizon*, *Master Class* or *Life on Earth* are typical examples. Popular series like *Tomorrow's World*, *Survival* and *Panorama* help to increase awareness and understanding of technological and environmental change, of changing employment and leisure patterns, and of social and political problems. There are programmes which stimulate interest in such subjects as cookery, gardening, languages, health and physical exercise. Many adults have been prompted to seek a course at the local centre as a result of having had their appetites whetted by a television programme or series. The literacy campaign gives a clear instance of the way in which television can heighten public awareness of a service and encourage and direct those who need, or are willing to give, help. The Adult Literacy Support Services Fund, set up by the BBC, is an example of how to provide listeners and viewers with information about local access to educational opportunities. The IBA is now encouraging the independent broadcasting companies to establish a joint telephone referral unit to direct callers towards locally available adult education facilities.
- 98 Wherever possible, the media programmes should be systematically planned and co-ordinated with those of other providers. Information about proposed output needs to be made available early enough for it to be taken into account when local centres and colleges are planning their own schedules. Educational broadcasts are likely to be more effective if they are linked to local support systems; the BBC already has a number of continuing education liaison officers and the IBA propose to encourage the appointment of community education officers to help with co-ordination, give previews of intended output, consider suggestions for amendment, and support 'off screen' follow-up study. Local centres will need recording and reproduction equipment to help individuals and groups to gain maximum benefit from broadcast material on a 'self-help' basis. The present copyright and recording restrictions will need to be modified and the Council therefore strongly supports the recommendations made to the Home

Office by the Copyright Committee chaired by Lord Justice Whitford.

99 Some authorities and centres have developed useful links with local radio, which, besides direct educational broadcasting, can do much to publicise local educational facilities and stimulate interest to learn more about local concerns and problems. With the number of local radio stations increasing each year there is ever widening scope for adult educators both to contribute to the broadcast programmes and to use them for specifically educational purposes.



VI POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES

100 The establishment of the Advisory Council by the last government and the extension of its life by the present administration might be regarded as signifying a commitment by both major political parties to adult and continuing education, and their wish to develop the present maze of un-coordinated provision into a more comprehensive system through a more clearly devised national policy. The Secretary of State for Education and Science in the last government said:

"It is not my wish that adult education should be asked to bear more than its fair share of any necessary economies".

After taking office the present Secretary of State wrote to the Advisory Council in June 1979:

"I do fully recognise the valuable role that adult education has played in the past and appreciate the increasingly significant contribution it could make in the future in helping individuals to develop their own potential by acquiring those basic skills without which it is difficult to function in our society. . . and in enriching our lives and improving our understanding of the society in which we live".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary Dr Boyson, speaking in Parliament in January 1980 said:

"We believe that expenditure on adult education is one of the most purposeful and productive aspects of all education expenditure".

101 These Ministerial statements have not apparently been accompanied by any really effective communication with the local authorities to make clear the government's favourable attitude towards adult education. The statements being made by Ministers at the Department of Education and Science are not consistent with the decisions being made by many local authorities in allocating their resources. Responsibility for local arrangements obviously lies with the local authorities and ultimately with the people they represent, but central government has a responsibility to ensure a proper balance in the level of provision throughout the country, and that comparable educational opportunities are available to all adults irrespective of where they live. The Minister has a duty under Section 1 of the 1944 Education Act "To secure the effective execution by local education authorities of the national policy of providing a varied and comprehensive education service in every area". It is hard to reconcile this with the present circumstances of adult education provision, which can be more

clearly seen as 104 separate local policies on whether and when to provide and at what level in a extended range of fees.

102 In agreeing with the Russell committee's conclusion that, "In a negative sense the recent history of adult education makes clear how important is the lead from central government", the Council notes with hopeful approval Mr Mark Carlisle's recent statement that:

*"The often quoted description of education as 'a national service, locally administered' remains true and apt. If the proper exercise of his statutory functions means that the Secretary of State intervenes in education matters more than some people would like, then I do not mind being labelled an 'interventionist'. Not only is it lawful; it is also, I hope and I believe, in the interests of education"*¹³⁴

It is fruitless for the Council to enquire into and advise on a whole variety of aspects in the provision of adult education, or indeed to be concerned about future developments, unless the local education authorities are at least encouraged to maintain a firm financial and organisational base on which the future can grow. Many national and local politicians in all parties are insufficiently appreciative of either the full range of activity in the education of adults or the need of it. Adult educators must take some responsibility for this lack of awareness and appreciation and must work to alter it.

103 Local authorities operate most confidently within a clearly defined statutory framework. As already noted, the relevant section of the 1944 Education Act is not sufficiently specific in its requirements. The Act will soon be forty years old, and the proviso which links Section 41 to the long outmoded 'schemes of further education' is no longer relevant and can indeed be invoked to deny the provision that the Act requires. Until the Section can be amended (the Council is examining possible forms of amendment as part of its enquiry into development strategies for continuing education) it needs to be backed by much clearer guidance at national level. The Secretary of State should inform local authorities that unless they provide reasonable opportunities for adult education and the financial support and other resources whch these require, they are failing to comply with the requirements of the Act.

104 The public provision for adult general education may or may not be regarded as marginal to the rest of the public education system, but its costs most certainly are. In the current financial year the net expenditure on it will probably be less than £35 million out of a total education budget of more than £8,000

million; less than one half of one per cent of the total or roughly 90 pence for each adult in the population.

105 In most sectors of education the diminishing numbers of children and adolescents has had inescapable implication for provision, and demand and the related need for resources are already falling or are soon expected to do so. But in adult education there is no lessening of need and there need be no fall in demand. In the early 1960s the service over much of the country was still largely without full-time professional staff to guide and develop it. Net expenditure on the service was then, as it is again now, less than one half of one per cent of the total education budget. By the mid 1970s, provision and standards were both transformed as adult education's share of resources increased, and as more people realised that the simple distinction between vocational studies and recreational pursuits completely obscured the social realities of adult education. There is now a serious danger of losing much of the ground gained in the past fifteen years. If the retreat is not to become a rout, *all* local education authorities must consider the consequences of allowing their net expenditure on adult general education to fall in real terms below their share of the already diminished figure of £32 million indicated nationally in the 1980-81 Rate Support Grant. Below this level the essential fabric of the service will not be sustained, and the service will no longer be in a position to harness the external resources of voluntary effort nor to use the financial and other support to meet special needs for which agencies such as the Manpower Services Commission and the Home Office are willing to provide. There must be the political will and the financial means to sustain the service.

At the start of this report it was noted that very little is said here about the adult education provided in and through polytechnics, colleges of education, universities, long-term residential colleges and voluntary bodies such as the Workers' Educational Association. Nor has the report been concerned with education specifically related to the manpower and training needs of industry. It has concentrated on the provision made in local authority maintained centres in local communities, because this is the broad area of work which seems to be most seriously in danger now and in the immediate future. Any strategy for continuing education must aim for a comprehensive and widely accessible service, and the local adult centres must therefore be protected so that they and their work can contribute fully to this development alongside the other, and invariably much larger, educational institutions. The broader

considerations about the development of a national strategy for continuing education, and the legislative, financial and organisational framework which that development implies, are dealt with in a separate report to be published shortly by the Advisory Council.



VII CONCLUSIONS

The text of the report has sought to cover the main issues which arise, in the Advisory Council's view, from any consideration of the current state of the adult education service and the economic use of its available resources. The report contains suggestions and examples which it is hoped providing bodies will draw on according to their own particular circumstances. These are not repeated in this final section but the main conclusions to be derived from the report are drawn together here in two parts: first, the need for a minimum threshold commitment to adult general education and the requirements for that; second, the other requirements which the Advisory Council considers need to be implemented to protect the future for adult education.

106 The Advisory Council considers that the present circumstances require the clear indication of a *minimum threshold commitment* to adult general education by which central government and the local education authorities may judge the adequacy of their policies and provision for the adult education service. The main aim must be to safeguard the present reduced level of provision. Any further reductions will disable the service and jeopardise its recovery. No public service should be brought to that condition. The present substance of the adult education service must be preserved if it is to regain the strength with which to rebuild itself. The Advisory Council regards the following four elements of provision as essential to this minimum threshold commitment:

- Provision of a suitable administrative structure with an *adequate establishment of full-time organising staff*. As a general guide the Advisory Council advocates *not less than* one full-time appointment for every 30,000 adults in each local authority area. This formula should apply to *general* organising staff employed by local education authorities as area or centre principals, heads of adult studies departments or tutor-organisers. Other equally important full-time staff appointments such as specialist organisers of, for example, literacy schemes, full-time teachers of special subjects, and the staff employed by the Responsible Bodies, should *not* be included for the purposes of this calculation (paragraph 60).
- Provision of suitable and reasonably accessible *accommodation*, free of cost for bona-fide *educational* programmes provided by statutory and voluntary agencies (paragraphs 73 and 75).

- Provision of programmes, fully subsidised when necessary, intended to reach *educationally disadvantaged groups*, including provision for adult literacy, numeracy, and basic communication skills for employability; English as a second language for resident non-English speakers, and certain special provision for the physically or mentally handicapped (paragraphs 15 and 84). (The Advisory Council assumes continued subvention for the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit at least at the present level, and maintained support for special programmes from 'outside' agencies including the Manpower Services Commission, the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and the European Economic Community).
- Provision of programmes of training and development for full-time and part-time staff, both paid and voluntary (paragraphs 69 to 71).

The Advisory Council considers that the costs of meeting this threshold commitment should be excluded from charges made to students; that the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales should commend this minimum provision to local authorities; and that, until the overall financial situation improves, the Rate Support Grant should continue to make allowance for expenditure at the level which this commitment requires.

107 The Advisory Council draws the following further conclusions from its deliberations in compiling this report:

Central Government

The main features of government policy for adult education should be clearly defined, publicly stated, and officially communicated to the local education authorities by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office (paragraphs 101 to 103).

Local Education Authorities

- Each local education authority should establish suitable co-ordinating machinery for adult education with representation of the main organisations, both statutory and voluntary, locally engaged in the provision of adult education (paragraph 40).
- Each local education authority should invite the voluntary organisations in its area to examine their role in adult education, so as to determine how this can best be developed to mutual advantage (paragraphs 47 to 50).
- Each local education authority should review its regulatory

framework for adult education to ensure that this is sufficiently flexible to meet present needs (paragraph 51).

- Local education authorities responsible for short-term residential colleges should recognise the national as well as the local importance of the facilities they offer and balance these against any relatively small savings to be gained from partial or complete closure of these probably irreplaceable educational assets (paragraph 72).
- Local education authorities should consider the needs of adult education before deciding that any educational accommodation is surplus and disposable (paragraph 76).
- Local education authorities should have a clear code of acceptable practice to minimise the potential for misunderstanding and conflict over the shared use of premises (paragraph 78).
- Local education authorities should pursue ways of containing the overhead costs of premises, such as heating and caretaking, so as to free more resources for maintaining and developing educational provision (paragraph 81).
- Fees charged to adult students and entitlements to remission of fees should take account, as far as possible, of each individual adult's capacity to pay (paragraph 84).
- Each local education authority should re-examine its existing arrangements for inter-authority recoupment of expenditure on adult general education, in order to maintain or restore satisfactory working arrangements with neighbouring authorities so that students can cross authority boundaries without financial discrimination (paragraph 86).



VIII NOTES AND REFERENCES

(1) (para 1) *Department of Education and Science Press Notice* (26 March 1980), accompanying the Government *White Paper on Public Expenditure* (Cmnd No. 7841) of the same date, refers to adult education as follows: "The plans assume that expenditure will be reduced by about one-third (about £15 million in a full academic year) below the 1978-79 level from September 1980 onwards. If most of this saving is achieved through increased fees, enrolments should not fall substantially below the current level of about two million students on evening and other courses".

(2) (para 6) *Ministry of Education Pamphlet No. 8 Further Education* (HM Stationery Office 1947) paragraph 74.

(3) (para 7) *Ibid* paragraph 82.

(4) (para 10) The Universities Council for Adult Education is currently investigating this field of provision and has published a *Report of the Working Party on Public Participation* (UCAE 1980). See also the article by Hampton, W "Adult Education for Participation – A Survey of Provision by Education Agencies" in *Studies in Adult Education* Vol 12 No 2 October 1980 (National Institute of Adult Education). The Advisory Council is planning to examine the wider contribution which adult education provision could make for the social, political and civic education of adults.

(5) (para 17) *ACACE Formal Response* (March 1980) to the DES Consultative Proposals for *A Framework for the School Curriculum*.

(6) (para 21) *Department of Education and Science Adult Education: A Plan for Development* (HM Stationery Office 1973).

(7) (para 22) *ACACE A Strategy for the Basic Education of Adults* (ACACE 1979).

(8) (para 24) *ACACE Adults – Their Educational Experience and Needs* (to be published by ACACE in 1981).

(9) (para 26) Woodhall, M *Scope and Costs of the Education and Training of Adults in Britain* (ACACE 1980). The author estimates that about 5 or 6 million adults took part in some form of organised education or training in each year between the early and late 1970s. Expenditure on all the education and training provided for adults was probably comparable to less than half of the expenditure devoted to the initial educational system, and therefore represented about a third of the expenditure on all forms of education and training.

(10) (para 26) The Block Grant has ostensibly been introduced to simplify the previously extremely complicated calculations which determine the amount of funding each local authority receives through the Rate Support Grant from central government according to such variables as local needs and local resources. It will also provide central government with a lever to control local spending by setting a level of 'standard expenditure' above which local authorities will have

to meet an increasing proportion of their expenditure from locally raised funds. The computational device to be used in deciding 'standard expenditure' on education is based on the 'client group': in the primary school sector this is simply the number of children in the compulsory age range. That number is then multiplied by the average national cost of educating a primary pupil, and the total is finally adjusted to take account of local circumstances such as social deprivation and geographical size. The size of the 'client group' in adult education is much less clear, and its unit cost is therefore likely to be more difficult to calculate. Because of the relative precision in calculating the size and unit costs of the 'client groups' in compulsory schooling and in the immediate post-school further education sector, the adult education sector's much less precise basis for calculations may lead to further adverse effects in comparison, or even in competition, with these enormously larger areas of educational funding. The 'standard expenditure' mechanism allows central government to make the final decisions on all these kinds of questions. But local government is free to decide what, how much, and on what services to allocate its Block Grant.

(11) (para 32)
See for example Childs, *A Social Patterns of Enrolment* (National Institute of Adult Education 1972).

(12) (paras 33 and 84)
In November 1980 the Advisory Council and the National Institute of Adult Education conducted a joint survey of LEA adult education student fee charges. Results, based on information from 98 LEAs, show a range of non-vocational fees from 15 to 90 pence per hour – by comparison vocational fees (for one GCE O level course) range from 10 to 52 pence per hour. See *Survey of Fees charged by Local Education Authorities for Adult Education Courses in October/ November 1980* (NIAE/ACACE February 1981).

(13) (para 38)
See, for example, ACACE information report on *Regional Provision for the Training of Part-Time Adult Education Staff* (ACACE December 1980).

(14) (para 41)
DES Adult Education: A Plan for Development op cit, paragraphs 173 to 175.

(15) (para 41)
See, for example, ACACE Secretariat's report on *Local Development Councils for Adult Education* (ACACE February 1980).

(16) (para 46)
This enquiry forms part of the report of the *North West Area Institutional Study* to be published by ACACE in 1981.

(17) (para 56)
DES Adult Education: A Plan for Development op cit, paragraphs 66 and 200.

(18) (para 58)
Ibid paragraph 200.

(19) (para 59)
The Ministry of Education *Pamphlet No 8*, op cit, paragraph 78, made the point in 1947: "What it is sought to emphasize here is the gain to this work that must follow from the appointment of well-chosen officers, supported by keen committees, who could give their whole attention to the development".

(20) (para 59)
Ministry of Education Administrative Memorandum No 6/63: Adult Education (Accommodation and Staffing) (1963).

(21) (para 60)
In DES *Adult Education: A Plan for Development* op cit, paragraph 356, the Russell committee proposed 5 or 6 full-time staff for a population area of about 50,000 adults. The Advisory Council still regards this as the optimum figure to be aimed for in more favourable economic circumstances.

(22) (para 61)
Ibid paragraphs 362 to 378.

(23) (para 62)
Ibid paragraph 66.

(24) (para 69)
ACACE Regional Provision for the Training of Part-Time Adult Education Staff op cit.

(25) (para 69)
The Advisory Council has published two documents relating to the work of the Advisory Committee for the Supply and Training of Teachers (ACSTT): *Formal Response to the ACSTT Report on The Training of Adult Education and Part-Time Further Education Teachers* (ACACE October 1978) and *Formal Responses to the ACSTT Discussion Paper on Training for Education Management in Further and Adult Education* (ACACE December 1978). The Council has also published a *Statement* to the DES and the Welsh Office on the *Training of Adult Education Staff* (ACACE February 1980) in anticipation of the setting up of the Advisory Committee for the Supply and Education of Teachers (ACSET).

(26) (para 69)
The Advisory Council is currently examining the ways in which some voluntary bodies and associations provide training for part-time tutors in their areas of interest. An ACACE information report is expected to be published in 1981.

(27) (para 72)
'Public Statement on Short-Term Adult Residential Colleges', published as *ACACE Information Release No 23* (31 January 1980).

(28) (para 75)
The Advisory Council is currently examining the *Use of Accommodation in Adult Education* with particular reference to the value of prime-use accommodation. It is expected that a report will be published by ACACE in 1981.

(29) (para 77)
Knight, R "The Organisation of Leisure and Recreation in Bradford" in *Education* 27 June 1980 p 547.

(30) (para 79)
Two recent publications which examine the community college approach are Fairbairn, A N *The Leicestershire Community Colleges and Centres* (Nottingham University Adult Education Department 1979), and Jennings, B (Ed) *Community Colleges in England and Wales* (National Institute of Adult Education 1980).

(31) (para 86)
The Advisory Council surveyed all LEAs in England and Wales at the beginning of 1979 to ascertain their current policies on *Inter-Authority Free Trade and Fee Recoupment for Non-Vocational Adult Education*. The subsequent report, published by ACACE in January 1980, showed that about 60 per cent of authorities had restricted, or withdrawn from, recoupment arrangements; by the end of 1980 that proportion was probably nearer 80 per cent.

(32) (para 86)
Hall, R 'Financial Aspects of Differential Fees' in *Adult Education* Vol 53 No 5

January 1981 (National Institute of Adult Education). This article opens up new ground for consideration, although it may be questioned whether it has taken into account all the additional costs of accepting 'outside' students.

(33) (para 88)

Williams, G and Woodhall, M *Independent Further Education* (Policy Studies Institute 1979).

(34) (para 102)

Speech to the North of England Education Conference in Carlisle, 6 January 1981.



IX RESPONDENTS TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER 'PRESENT IMPERFECT'

Association for Adult and Continuing Education
Association for Adult and Continuing Education, Short-Term Residential Colleges Division
Association of County Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Barking College of Adult Education
Barking College of Adult Education Students' Association
Barlow, Mr E – Featherbank Further Education Centre, Leeds
Barbanell, Mr D C – Warden, Belstead House, Ipswich
Bevan, Mr R W – Director of Education, Powys County Council
Bourne School, Adult Education Committee of the Community Council, Hampshire
Burgess Hill Area Adult Education Management Committee
Caribbean Communications Project
Collins, Dr D J – Head of Adult Education Department, Redditch College
Cornwall Technical College
Council for Educational Technology
Dorset Adult Education Centre Principals Conference
Dorset Adult Literacy Scheme
Dorset Education Committee
Dyson, Professor R – Director of Adult Education, Keele University
East Midlands Regional Advisory Council for Further Education
East Midlands Regional Institute of Adult Education
Edinburgh University
Educational Centres Association, Executive Committee
Educational Centres Association, East Anglia Region
Educational Centres Association, Greater London Region
Educational Centres Association, Surrey Region
Ette, Mr G
Fisher, Revd. – Secretary, Education and Society, British Council of Churches
Foulser, Mr E W
Gent, Mr K R – Tutor Organiser, Workers Educational Association, East Midlands District
Health Education Council
Hull College of Higher Education
Hunter, Miss M – Area Principal, Ealing Adult Education and Community Service
Independent Broadcasting Authority
Isle of Ely College Adult Association, Wisbech
Isle of Wight Education Authority
James, Professor W – Open University
Judgemeadow Community College Management Committee, Leicester
Kenn, Mr A R
Kent Education Authority
Kent Education Authority, Group of Adult Education Staff
Leeds University, Adult Education Department
Library Association
Linked Educational Advisory Service for Adults (LEASA), Newcastle upon Tyne
London and Home Counties Regional Advisory Council for Technological Education
London University, Extra-Mural Studies Department, Tutorial Classes Committee
McNair, Mr S – County Adult Education Officer, Essex
Manchester Education Authority

Manchester Education Authority Central Development Council for Community Education
Mitson, Mr R – Principal, Abraham Moss Centre, Manchester
National and Local Government Officers Association, Education Department
National Association for Staff Development
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
National Association of Youth and Community Education Officers, North East Region
National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes
National Federation of Women's Institutes
Newcastle upon Tyne Education Authority, Adult Education Development Council
Newton, Mr D – Dean of Adult and Community Studies, North Cheshire College
Norfolk Education Authority, Area Heads of Adult Education
Northern Advisory Council for Further Education
North Havering College of Adult Education, Consultative Committee
North Western Regional Advisory Council for Further Education
Nottingham University Adult Education Centre, Student Committee
Nottingham University, Adult Education Department
Open University
Open University Students' Association
Orpington and District Student Advisory Council
Owen, Mr D – Tutor, Beacon Hill Centre, Cumbria
Parker, Mr A M – Director of Extra-Mural Studies, Birmingham University
Parrott, Mr A – Dean of Adult Studies, Yeovil College
Percival Guild, Rugby
Pre-School Playgroups Association
Risman, Mrs A – Secretary, Workers Educational Association, Berks, Bucks and Oxon District
Rodgers, Mr F A – Assistant Education Officer, Cleveland Education Authority
Rogers, Mr K
Sargent, Ms K – Area Organiser, Adult Studies Department, The College, Swindon
Saunders, Mr R – Curock House Community Centre, Carlisle
Seabrooke, Mr G A – Director, Wolverhampton Polytechnic
Selby, Mr D and adult education colleagues – Lancashire Education Authority
Small, Mr N J – Senior Counsellor, Open University, Yorkshire Region
Smith, Mr C G – Part-Time Tutor, Forest Adult Education Centre, Loughton, Essex
Socialist Educational Association
Society of Education Officers
Southern Regional Council for Further Education
South Havering College of Adult Education, Area Consultative Committee
South West Regional Council for Further Education
Swarthmore Educational Centre, Leeds
Thacker, Mr D – Deputy Principal, Sheffield City Polytechnic
Volunteer Centre
Volunteer Centre, Media Project
West Midlands Advisory Council for Further Education, Community Education Advisory Committee
West Midlands Adult Education Group
West Sussex Education Authority, North Eastern Area Advisory Council for Adult Education
Wensum Lodge Adult Education Centre, Norwich
Wicker, Mr B – Principal, Fircroft College, Birmingham
Willmer, Mr SW – Chairman, East Midlands Area Conservative Advisory Committee on Education
Wiltshire, Professor H

Workers Educational Association, East Midlands District
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